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SUBJECT: DAMMED BY THE GENERALS: REPORT CRITICIZES SALWEEN DAM PROJECTS

REF: CHIANG MAI 51

1. Summary: A report by a Karenni research group details environmental, political and human rights objections to the Burmese government's plan to construct dams on the Salween River and criticizes the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT)'s December 9, 2005 Memorandum of Understanding with the Burmese regime to build four dams on the Salween and one on the Tenasserim River. End summary

2. In a 70-page booklet titled "Dammed by Burma's Generals", the Karenni Development Research Group (KDRG) calls on the Thai government to stop all plans to jointly develop hydropower with Burma's military regime. The report, which has been cited by Thai and international NGOs who are opposed to the projects (reftel), asks international investors and bilateral and multilateral development agencies not to provide funds to the Salween dam projects.

3. Subtitled "The Karenni Experience with Hydropower Development From Lawpita to the Salween", the report describes the water shortages, destructive floods, population displacement, and disrupted fish habitats caused by an earlier hydropower project at Lawpita in Karenni State. "Forced displacements, forced labor, extensive laying of landmines on farm fields, sexual violence, and extrajudicial killing" resulted in an estimated 12,500 people losing their homes.

4. The report criticizes Thailand's agreement with Burma to build a series of new dams on the Salween River in eastern Burma. According to the KDRG, "One of these, the Weigyi Dam, will be at least ten times higher than Lawpita's main dam, and will submerge many of the best lowland farming areas of Karenni State, impacting 30,000 people and causing irreversible environmental damage."

5. The report continues: "To the Burmese regime and Thai government, the Salween dams represent merely a 'win-win' situation - electricity supply for the latter and needed income for the former. This simple equation ignores the regime's internationally condemned human rights and corruption record. It also once again excludes the Karenni from any decision-making process about their own resources, leaving them to bear the costs of power being provided to people in faraway places."

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